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The sweet seduction of Atahualpa's gold: betrayals and disagreement concerning the voracity of the lagoons in Cajamarca, Peru

A doce sedução do ouro de Atahualpa: traições e desacordo sobre a voracidade das lagoas em Cajamarca, Peru

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Relationships among the peasants and the lagoons in rural communities situated in the northern Andes in Peru are ambiguous. The lagoons, located at the top of the mountains, appear as ferocious entities in the stories of local people. However, when these waters were threatened by a mining project, the peasants defended these lagoons with their own lives. This work aims to analyse narratives concerning the metamorphosis of humans when they are seduced by these lagoons. The paper is based on ethnographic research conducted between 2013 and 2014 in the village of El Tambo, in the district of Bambamarca, Hualgayoc Province, and the town of Celendín, Celendín Province. Both localities are within the region of Cajamarca in the Peruvian Andes. Besides this period of research, new reports and testimonies were collected in both localities during short visits between 2016 and 2020. Certain categories, like wild/tame, sweet/savoury, voracious/self-controlled, are essential to the analysis in order to understand the relationship between the seduction of the beings that inhabit the lagoons and the repudiation of the voracity of open-pit mining.

Voracity, Mining, Pacts, Prey.

As relações entre os camponeses e as lagoas nas comunidades rurais de Cajamarca, norte andino do Peru, são ambíguas. As lagoas que estão situadas no alto das montanhas aparecem como entidades bravas nos relatos das pessoas, contudo, quando as fontes de águas foram ameaçadas por um projeto de mineração, os camponeses as defenderam com as suas próprias vidas. O objetivo aqui é realizar uma análise de narrativas que tratam das lagoas e da metamorfose de humanos quando são seduzidos por elas. Este documento fundamenta-se em uma pesquisa etnográfica de campo entre os anos de 2013 e 2014 no povoado rural El Tambo, distrito de Bambamarca, província de Hualgayoc e na cidade de Celendín, província de Celendín. São duas localidades da região de Cajamarca nos Andes do Peru. Além desse período de pesquisa, novos relatos e testemunhos foram coletados em viagens curtas a ambas as localidades entre os anos 2016 e 2020. Algumas categorias articuladas, tais como bravo/manso, doce/salgado, voraz/disciplinado, apresentaram-se como indispensáveis na análise a fim de se chegar a uma compreensão da relação entre a sedução dos seres que habitam as lagoas e o repúdio à voracidade da mineração a céu aberto.

Voracidade, Mineração, Pactos, Presa.

1. Introduction

In the Cajamarca region in the Northern Andes of Peru, a highly agitated scenario has been present for about ten years. In 2011 and 2012, some provinces in the region were placed under a state of emergency. Since 2010, the Perol, Mala, Chica and Azul lagoons have been threatened with death by an open-pit mining project called Conga, in a region of the same name, which consists of expanding a currently operating mine, Yanacocha, that has existed since 1992-93 and whose gold reserves are coming to an end. Compensation for the loss of the lagoons resides in the construction of modern reservoirs that, according to the company, would contribute to better management of rainwater for people in the countryside.

Today, the project is paralysed due to a strike organised by local inhabitants, who have expressed their disagreement. Many peasants claimed that mutilating the lagoons and mountains and installing artificial ponds is like amputating a leg of a human being and replacing it with a prosthesis. The way they described the territory as a body was also attributed to the lagoons, which for the peasant women were like the breasts of the earth where that which feeds it germinates. The lagoons are described here as feeling beings, similar to De la Cadena's (2015) research in southern Peru on earth-beings. Earth-beings are entities that emerge and destabilise the place imposed on them 500 years ago by coloniality and, in the last 200 years, by the modern state, because they are not "merely" nature.

In ethnographic research conducted between 2013 and 2014, one of the resistance songs that I listened to against such a project is entitled "Água si, oro no" [Water yes, gold no], which begins with: "No way, no more dialogue, since they deceived Atahualpa, let history not repeat itself! The people united will never be defeated. Today more than ever, Conga won't go forward"[1]. The deception and betrayal exposed in the song were associated with Ollanta Humala, who was President of Peru from 2011 to 2016, because he did not impede the Conga project as promised in his election campaign. Humala had acted like the Spanish invader Francisco Pizarro, who, after having imprisoned the last Inca, Atahualpa, in the city of Cajamarca, agreed to free him if he paid a ransom with an abundance of gold and silver. Pizarro received the riches, but he betrayed the agreement and killed the Inca. Such processes imply the emergence of a world that Guamán Poma de Ayala (2015) had already reported for centuries: "the world in reverse" based on his lived experience of colonisation that overlooks important protocols with regard to the land, the people and the gods and that pulverises the "centrality" of the production of life. Thus, it is important to consider that these "betrayals", that of Atahualpa by Pizarro and of the Bambamarquino people by Ollanta, can be articulated in the manner that Rivera Cusicanqui (1984) clarifies, through the articulations of "long" and "short" memories. This reflection makes sense when thinking about the fear of potentially unfortunate contexts if gold is removed from its proper place because the state made a pact with important businessmen behind the peasants' backs.

However, some of my interlocutors in Cajamarca told me that, knowing that

1 ¡Manam Kachu, no más diálogo, como engañaron a Atahualpa, que no se repita la historia! ¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido. Hoy más que nunca, Conga no vaaaaaaa!

Atahualpa had been betrayed by Pizarro, the Inca's followers hid the gold in El Perol lagoon, where the mining company Yanacocha intends to install one of the pits of the controversial mining project. Another version of this account is also presented by the professor on Bambamarca, Mejía Lozano (2013). He says that since the gold was hidden in the lagoon, she adopts human children. The adoptees undergo a transformation because they acquire golden horns and gain the ability to transit through the waters that circulate under the earth, emerging on the surface of the lagoon to seduce humans.

The above provokes thoughts that the defence of the lakes by the Cajamarca peasants during the conflict is linked to important premises that are related to the design of their world. Even though these lakes are feared by people due to their potency, the experience of fighting for/with them against the intentions of the mining company does not come from nowhere, from a void, rather from narratives that evoke some order of the world when their life projects are usurped by multiple, unwanted articulations due to economic activity. That is the reason I focus on the stories and their articulations with the new context.

Thus, the purpose of this work is to conduct an analysis of narratives that involve the lagoons and the metamorphosis of humans into non-humans when they are sweetly seduced by the same sources of water in the region, in order to achieve an understanding of the repudiation that people express to the voracity of opencast mining. This voracity, which is attributed to non-humans, maintains parallels with the voracity of the Spaniards, also described by Guamán Poma (2015), of wanting gold without respecting the protocols that the local peoples maintain with nature. And then from Humala, evidently not the country's only president to have such an attitude. I should mention that I do not intend to delve into the conflict surrounding the mining project – the important effects of the loss of natural water sources were discussed in another context (Peñafiel and Radomsky 2021) –, rather I intend to show how narratives become an inextricable part of the struggle.

For the analysis, I articulate certain categories that are present in these narratives: wild/tame, sweet/savoury, voracious/self-controlled. These categories are associated with times/humanities that are in conflict, a theme I seek to explain below. This document is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2014 in the town of El Tambo, in the Bambamarca district in Hualgayoc Province, and the town of Celendín in Celendín Province. Both locations are in the Cajamarca region. Throughout this period, I visited the Cajamarca Rural Libraries Network, in the city of Cajamarca, where the recollections of peasant men and women have been compiled since 1971. In addition, there were short trips to the aforementioned localities between 2016 and the beginning of 2020.

This article is divided as follows: following the Introduction, I analyse two reports, one on the Mamacocha lagoon that is compiled in the Cajamarca Rural Libraries, and a narrative on the El Perol lagoon, which was shared with me together with comments by a resident of El Tambo in 2014, one of the lakes that would be sacrificed to construct one of the mine pits. Finally, I expound my conclusions, in which I associate the voracity of the lagoons with the unbridled "hunger" of

those who covet gold.

2. Returning to Cajamarca

Between 2016 and 2020, I made short trips to the Cajamarca region when I was researching perceptions of changes in fog density and rainfall in the region. In the town of Celendín, I met Xavier who between 2013 and 2014 had been an important interlocutor while I researched the relationship between water and open pit mining, specifically the Conga project.

Xavier suggested that I talked to Oswaldo. At his farm, Oswaldo kindly received us and, after conversing, when I was leaving with Xavier, Oswaldo called us again from a distance. I could not hear, but Xavier replied to him in a loud voice: "another day we'll stay for lunch, we're in a hurry". Oswaldo insisted and Xavier agreed. Back at Oswaldo's farm, he said that his wife, who was preparing the food, asked why we were "*despreciando*" [snubbing] her food. *Despreciar* is a word that needs to be highlighted here because in the Andes it is associated with avarice, as observed in Caballero's research (2013). However, the possible snub can be related to other factors, which I come back to later.

Returning to the anecdote, there was a silent pause, but we entered the house and sat down at the table to share potatoes. While we were having lunch, Oswaldo and Xavier began a conversation about the Yanacocha mining company. I did not want to interrupt the flow and spontaneity of the conversation by turning on my tape recorder, so I present here the short dialogue that remained in my memory:

> Xavier: Why have the lagoons gotten tamer? They were ferocious before.
> Oswaldo: I don't know. Before, around the lagoon, golden bulls appeared to people passing by. But whoever picked one up to take it home had to feed it white sugar all the time. And if you didn't feed it properly, the little bull ate the family members. These (family members) got sick, became very thin and died in a few days.
> Researcher: And how did people know that they had to feed it white sugar?
> Oswaldo: In dreams, the little bull threatened the person that if they didn't give it something to eat, it would eat their children. It would extract their fat and blood.
> Xavier: And they say that the people to whom these bulls appear are good-hearted people.
> Researcher: Why is that?
> Xavier: I don't know, maybe because they'll know how to take care of them and feed them.

Voracity is a theme that draws our attention. It is described as an unbridled hunger that disrespects protocols and that also appears in the denunciations of Guamán Poma (2015) around 1600 regarding the Spanish invaders who only thought about gold. Tristan Platt (2002, 150) highlighted the association between vora-

city and what is not of this world when analysing the birth protocols and postnatal care of Bolivian women to turn their newborns into people: "The construction of the Andean Indigenous person arises, therefore, from the reconciliation between the voracity of the pagan ancestors and the food disciplines of Andean-Christian society". That is, humanising implies controlling the unbridled hunger of that born for "this side of the world".

Similarly, Arnold and Yapita (2018) explain that women from the Qaqachaka community in Bolivia learn from an early age to cultivate the ability to envelop, because they are the ones who envelop in their bellies the fetus that will be born to the world. According to Pazarella's (2017) interpretation of the previous text, that which is born from the envelopment of mothers for "this side of the world" does not form part of this humanity, hence, the importance of "humanising" that born from the mother's belly. Regarding the Mamacocha lagoon, which I examine in the next section, she is also a Mother: Mamacocha is Mother Lagoon and what comes out of her is not of this world either, as we shall see.

2.1 The parallels between the bodies of the lagoons and of people

In order to understand the charms of the Mamacocha lagoon, one of the lagoons in the Conga region that Oswaldo was referring to, it is worth considering the enchanted ones as more-than-human entities, as highlighted by Durazzo and Segata (2020), who establish a bond with people through the ability to transform, that is, to acquire physical characteristics of other beings in order to communicate with humanity on this side of the world. These beings have the ability to transit between worlds, and people only become enchanted if they consume the food or accept the gifts offered by their hosts. By accepting, the victim remains captive in the world of the other. In Cajamarca, this is the great fear of the peasants, since people who respond to the enticements no longer recognise their relatives, neighbours or their community. The victims are "adopted" by these entities. The intentionality of these beings who seduce and make people see things that are not real is associated with the presence and motivations of people from outside – from the capital, Lima, or other big cities, in general – who seduce and captivate the locals.

In the village of El Tambo, in the district of Bambamarca, Hualgayoc Province, peasants claim that the Mamacocha lagoon, which is located at one of the highest points in the mountains, nourishes their land and their bodies with the same water from which she feeds. The lagoon is not among those that would be directly targeted by intervention; however, the peasants of El Tambo claim that Mamacocha would "dry up" if the other lagoons, El Perol, Azul, Cortada and Mala, located in Celendín Province, suffer intervention by the mining company. People also claim that if Mamacocha "dries up", the people would also "dry up", that is, they would become very skinny and without the strength to work the land. And these are not desirable bodies for peasant communities.

All the water from the lagoons circulates through the body of the mountain

to be distributed by the water springs. In order for the water to feed the land of the peasants, the people guide it to their land by furrowing artisanal channels in the land and hillsides. The circulation of flows enables the feeding of rivers, the earth, families, bodies. As seen by Dépaz Toledo (2015) while analysing the Huarochiri Manuscripts[2], human actions like weaving, singing, creating or planting imply continuing the course of that which is vitalising. Thus, guiding the waters to nourish the sown plots cannot be translated as an instrumental action. Following a very similar line of reasoning, Caballero (2019) explains that a body accustomed to a certain type of climate, food or drink is a transformed body. In other words, regarding our case in northern Peru, a body nourished by Conga water is a different body than one that drinks water from another source.

Even though the people of Bambamarca and Celendín have defended Mamacocha with their lives, the lagoons cannot be trusted. People told me that during nights of vigil for Mamacocha during the months of conflict, the lagoon seduced the very people who were defending it. It was not uncommon for reports of certain incidents while watching the lagoon. Some people said that on occasion they had to pull their colleagues by the poncho because, instead of moving around it, they were entering the lagoon without realising it. For those who were allowing themselves to be enchanted and were saved by their companions a little earlier, they confessed that they saw a path and did not notice that they were entering the lagoon.

In other cases, they said that when they were sleeping, camping out during the vigil, they woke up and saw a very beautiful woman who called them into the lagoon. In addition to these reports, some are even more impressive: peasants faithful to the Pentecostal church and defenders of the lagoons shared with me that they defend the lagoons so that they no longer take them away, and their duty was to protect the souls that cannot see they are bargaining chips between the Devil and the mining entrepreneur (Peñafiel 2022).

Returning to the dialogue I described at the beginning, Mamacocha's voracity revolved around the fact that "before" she was wild and that, over time, she had become accustomed to the people who began to inhabit the higher altitudes. One clue that leads us to what it means to be "bravo" is a study by Nantes Cruz (2002) in the Colombian Massif, where peasants and Yanacona indigenous people attribute to any virgin entity the qualifiers "bravo" [ferocious] or "salvaje" [wild] to inhabit, populate, sow, that is, to tame or humanise. In the narratives in Cajamarca, the word "*malo*" [bad] is sometimes used instead of "*bravo*", a matter that should not be confused with the good/evil dichotomy brought by the Spanish invaders, but rather with the power of the entity.

At the same time, for Nantes Cruz (2002), the category of "*bravo"* is also associated with the place where ancestors reside, and other more-than-human entities that are alien to humans. According to the author, *bravo* can be associated with the world of the abnormal and the *compactuados* [people who make a pact with the Devil], those who present behaviours that are not accepted by the communities, such as not sharing resources and making pacts with the Devil to attain social

2 *Gods and Men of Huarochiri* is a Quechua manuscript composed between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It concerns the deities and their relationships with humans in Huarochiri Province, in the Lima region, before the arrival of Europeans. These narratives were collected by order of the Spaniard Francisco de Ávila for the purpose of extirpating idolatries.

ascension from one day to the next, also addressed in Glass-Coffin (2002). In a research conducted in Conchucos, Ancash, in Peru, Venturoli (2019) shows how relationships between humans and mountains, called *awilitus*[3], are regulated by the categories wild and tame or domesticated. The author explains that the word *awilitus* refers to ancestors and is not linked to a specific family, but rather to the community. It is also evident that Mamacocha (Mother Lagoon) is not associated with a specific family, since the peasant women of El Tambo explained to me that the lagoon distributes water equally to the people of the communities – like a mother does with her children. She does not allow anyone to go unnourished by her waters and thus, it is worth highlighting, it is seen as an insult if someone does not allow another to irrigate their plot of potatoes with the water that is for everyone.

3 *Awilitus* is the Quechua articulation of the Spanish word abuelitos, which is an affectionate diminutive of grandparents.

In the same research, Venturoli (2019) explains that sharing food, the place and communication is important, but we should always bear in mind that this relationship is not symmetrical. The *awilitus* are the strongest and those who must be negotiated with. The emphasis that the author gives to the place is interesting, since both the people of the communities and the mountains share a life project together. This reminds me that in the field, a peasant woman once explained to me that those who did not defend the lagoons in question did not feed on the potatoes nourished by the waters from the top of the mountains. From this point of view, the alienated position is assumed when someone stops participating in the rule of reciprocity, also discussed in Taussig (2010), and collaborates to make the world a place where "everything is bought", as described to me by the interlocutor. Such a world is not desired because in the one they live in, food is born, it grows, it is available to people based on their relationship with the environment. "Birth" is extremely important because it implies that which vitalises emerges from the circulation of water, while the mining company proposes that people depend on water pumped by them through reservoirs.

Thus, making use of the clues provide by Nantes Cruz (2002) and Venturoli (2019), in the following section, I present two narratives concerning the Conga lagoons. The first is a narrative explored in Mires Ortiz (2008a), entitled "*Todo encanta: La Mamacocha*" [Everything enchants: Mamacocha]. Then, I present the

case of the El Perol lagoon, a story shared by a resident of El Tambo, Bambamarca.

2.1.1 Mamacocha: concerning transformations and undue attachments

> Everything enchants
> Mamacocha
> Before, the lagoon was very ferocious.
> There was a young woman who every day went to graze her sheep near Mamacocha. She left very early in the morning and returned after dark, when prayers were already over. She took nothing more with her than oats or roasted corn kernels with her *rapadura*[4] to eat.
> One day the shepherdess did not return to her hut, nor were the sheep returned to the corral. Her parents looked for her for days, they cried and cried, but could not find her. One sunny morning, the young woman's father was sitting in a hole and suddenly he stands up and sees her combing her hair with a blonde woman to the song of the lagoon and soon after, the two of them dove into the lagoon. So, the father hired four men, each with their ropes, and they hid behind a rock. When the women appeared, they only threw the lasso over the young woman and ran off with her because the lagoon was covered in mist and it began to rain. The young woman shouted: Mamacocha, Mamacocha, don't leave me!
> Then they tied her to a pole. But she didn't eat anything they gave her.
> Her body was said to be pure hair and her feet looked like hooves. She told them that her Mamacocha only gave her sweets and fruit. She didn't even last eight days, she died telling them to let her go back to her Mamacocha[5].
> (Mires Ortiz 2008a, 59–60).

Let us analyse the story in parts. De la Torre (1986) suggests that some of these problems can be understood through different times, using the category time-humanity based on his research in the rural community of Porcón, also in the Cajamarca region. The author explains that when referring to current times, on this side of the world, peasant men and women are referring to the time of their humanity, when potatoes were cultivated, furrowing the earth and guiding the waters, and the products born from the earth are boiled, served with pepper and salt, and shared with relatives and visitors. It is also important to highlight the acts of sociability in this time-humanity, the sharing of food, always welcoming and never snubbing, as I discussed above. Otherwise, food does not come back to the person who once refused it.

On this side of the world, there are remnants of the past, the time of another humanity, principally in the caves, where they rest and wait to return to the present world. This other time-humanity is also called *Viejakuna*, as noted by De la Torre (1986). *Viejakuna* is personified by an anthropophagous old woman, the paternal grandmother of two children. The children are threatened with being eaten by their grandmother and rise up to the sky, where they become the Sun

4 A kind of hardened toffee made from raw, unrefined sugar.

5 Original: *Todo encanta. La Mamacocha. Antes la laguna era muy brava. Había una mitaya que se iba todos los días a pastear sus borregas cerca de la Mamacocha. Se iba bien madrugadito y volvía oscuro, ya cuando la oración se cerraba. Llevaba no más que avenita o canchita con su chancaca para comer. Un día ya no se asomó a su choza ni las wishas a su huatana. Sus papacitos la buscaron días, lloro, lloro y no lo encontraban. Una mañana de sol, el papá de la mitaya estaba sentado en una huecadita y de pronto se para, lo ve peinándose con una gringa al canto de la laguna y después se zambulleron las dos. Entonces, el señor contrató cuatro hombres con su soga cada uno y se escondieron tras de una piedra. Cuando asomaron las mujeres le echaron lazo a la mitaya no más y lo llevaron corriendo porque la laguna se cerró de niebla y comenzó a llover. La mitaya gritaba: - ¡Mamacocha, Mamacocha, no me dejes! Después la amarraron a un palo. Pero no comía nada de lo que le daban. Su cuerpo dizque estaba purito pelos y los pies parecían cascos. Decía que su Mamacocha le daba solo caramelos y frutas. No duró ni ocho días, se murió diciendo que la dejen ir a su Mamacocha* (Collected by Manuel Angulo León, de Asunción, Cajamarca).

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and Moon. The old woman dies and wild plants grow from her body. These stories are important because they provoke reflections on the past humanity, who ate raw meat and people's vital organs. In the present time, there are some remnants of the past, like flora and fauna and a physiography of the past which requires that certain care be taken, such as the lagoons and caves.

The wild plants that grow from the old woman's body are tasteless, hard, not readily cooked and are common at altitudes where the animals are taken by shepherdesses to be fattened. But the power of that humanity which today is under the earth is still in force. In other versions of *Viejakuna*, the woman continues to wander around, but because she is antisocial, she rarely appears.

Returning to the story on Mamacocha, the victim appears, a young shepherdess who wanders to high ground with her sheep so they can feed on wild plants. According to an informant during the research, daughters left their homes at dawn with the animals and remained there until the end of the day, when it was already dark, while the parents stayed behind to work on the farm. Thus, the parents live in an area located at a lower altitude, where potatoes can be planted, since these tubers do not grow at high altitudes.

It is clear that before the abduction, the victim in the story carried roasted corn with her, that is, corn cooked over fire or in the sun. As Lévi-Strauss (1990) has indicated, fire is a central operator in reducing food to an object. Salt and pepper are interesting ingredients because they deprive what is born of the earth of its capacity to act and to come into contact with the person as if it were another person. The young woman also carries *rapadura*, an artisanal sweet different from white sugar, which I discuss later.

Still, when she does not return, and nor do her sheep, her parents look for her in desperation. This aspect is important because it exposes a form of attachment on the part of the parents regarding their daughter, who is an only child. We can assume she is an only child because people are hired to rescue her, but no siblings or relatives appear. According to Spedding (2011), not allowing the daughter to form another family is a denial of the cycle of the production of life. However, when the victim returns, she does not return as human, rather with a body that is transformed. This transformation can be analysed as an undue attachment, as previously discussed in a study by Rivera Andía (2002). The author warns that attachment can produce death in life, since in the last part of the story the victim appears with hair and hooves, like a beast.

The beast can be associated with a mule that is born of two different species, an abnormal being. It is also an animal that comes from the domains of the entities of the underworld, as affirmed by De la Torre (1986).

Although the story does not reveal the details, the shepherdess seems to have responded to Mamacocha's enticements. In other stories, for example, concerning the Yahuarcocha lagoon in Mires Ortiz (2001), there are instances of fruits found on the edge of the lagoon, fruits that do not grow in the Andes and that seduce children and young people: according to these stories, when trying to reach for the fruit, the tree is swallowed by the lagoon, together with the victim. In 2016,

peasant and community teacher, Antônio, explained to me that by giving sugar to the lagoons, they become tame. Thus, they would not be afraid of the person, nor the person of them. A similar explanation was provided by Antonio's mother, Dona Sara. When I asked her about the ferocious lagoons, she replied: "They are not like that anymore. Now, there are many people living at high altitude and the lagoons have become accustomed to living together". At another time, when we discussed the same topic, she added: "Like how we got used to you".

Thus, we understand that the act of leaving sweets in the lagoons so as not to be devoured by them works as a way of showing a reciprocal relationship, within the social norms of the community, where giving and receiving is the norm par excellence. Thus, in Sara's logic, this is why the settlement of previously uninhabited areas has stimulated coexistence, albeit tense, between the lagoons and the people. Or, as she further elaborated, the lagoons got used to people, and even though there were some misunderstandings, this largely depends on the political relationship between the parties.

But why white sugar? Another interlocutor who was a shepherdess when she was young told me that for her, foods were just like those in the story: roasted corn, oats and *rapadura*. Fruits, such as bananas or oranges, which are from the coast or the jungle (the lower lands of the Amazon), were rare in the region and very expensive. Yes, they were desired and she saw these fruits in the markets in the region; however, they were very expensive to purchase. Sugar was prohibited by her grandmother because of the risk of losing teeth due to its consumption. So, white sugar is a rare, sweet product, but it is not good for health and the lagoons like it. For the inhabitants, the act of offering is to humanise the lagoon through the law of exchange rather than using sugar's powers to weaken the predatory affections of a hunting body.

Continuing the story. One day, her father finds her combing her hair in the company of a woman with blond hair. According to Mas (1988), the blonde woman, who is called *Duenda* in the region, is a being that is not from this side of the world, she appears as very beautiful, slender, with long, silky hair down to her waist, and seduces men with power, wealth and long life. Those who give in to her temptations become a *compactuado*, someone who fulfils the pact and surrenders their body, their soul and even their conscience. In this case, the young shepherdess is seen with the blonde woman. The act of combing her hair (with and like the blonde woman) means that the victim becomes as seductive as her captor.

I sustain the above because, according to Arnold (1997), in the Andes, hair is an object of desire and one of the most sensual acts that women can perform is untying, washing and combing their hair. In contrast, a married woman cannot do this in public, since it is against community norms. The young woman is next to the blonde woman, listening to the song of the lagoon.

Next, the young woman enters the lagoon – meaning she traverses both worlds, in the same manner as *Duenda*. De La Torre (1986, 67) explains that the lagoons are considered to be the "final gateway of underground conduits that communicate with the dark depths of the earth." It is through the lagoons that entities from

the underworld appear in order to steal the vitality of humans, who live on this side of the world. Regarding vitality, it is understood as that which nourishes the human body. These entities impede their victims from being fed by their family on this side of the world by severing the links between them. Not accepting food implies "snubbing", a problem that I mentioned at the beginning of the text when recounting my anecdote in Celendín. Thus, little by little, I understood that putting relationships with people I know (Xavier) and strangers (myself) to the test is also a way of relating to those entities that cannot be trusted. Since they all apparently metamorphose into human form, anyone can become one.

The parents made an attempt to recover their daughter and they managed to tether her to a pole so that she remained tied to the family land. This aspect is interesting because the parents hired people to lasso her, pull her out of the lagoon and tie her to the rural property, the human space, which is a way of destroying the dangerous bond between the young girl and Mamacocha. Rivera Andía (2002) also described a case in which an entity that was not from this side of the world grabbed a young girl, the family had to tie the remains of the entity near the river, outside the cave that was their home, precisely to place them in a similar situation to their victim: outside their world.

Finally, the victim's body is transforming because hair appears all over her body and her feet look like hooves that present the characteristics of a beast. She cannot get used to living with her family; worse, Mamacocha deprives her of the capacity to receive food and the possibility of sharing food with her parents. Here, though in a very different context, Fausto (2002) proposes that food can be understood as a device of akin bodies. That is to say, the familiarisation process implies eating "as" and "with", and not proceeding in this manner implies a denial of the relationship. As a continuous act, such denial would imply being an enemy. Thus, what defines her renunciation of humanity is that she no longer eats the foods she used to, because now she wants fruits and sweets (made from industrial sugar), as opposed to the traditional potatoes seasoned with salt and pepper of the Andean diet[6]. Her lack of recognition is revealed when the young woman recognises the lagoon as her mother. The victim alleges that she is fed sweets and fruits by Mamacocha which, as I have shown before, are rare and hard to find at higher altitudes in the region. Finally, she dies after eight days, a period that also appears in other narratives, such as Ricard Lanata (2009), in which her body returns to the old world from which she was kidnapped. During this period, people cannot swallow the food offered by the family, a problem that Rivera Andía (2002) explains as a blockage of the flows of the human body. The inability of being able to swallow local food can also be associated with the proposal of the Yanacocha mining company. By placing artificial reservoirs that have no connection with nature, Yanacocha seeks to block the flow of water that circulates through the land and mountains. In this way, the land, mountains and people cannot be nourished by the waters that are born in the Conga region and, once they are not vitalised by these waters, they die.

Note that the abduction of the shepherdess refers to Mamacocha's unbridled

6 It is worth mentioning that this transformation, wherein the person no longer recognises their own, is also similar to how the people of Cajamarca described to me those who made a pact with the mines. Mine beneficiaries are depicted as people who, like children, played with others and now do not recognise those in the community, they no longer say hello, they do not want to sit or eat together. Furthermore, someone commented that the first thing they do when they receive money from the mine is to buy trucks similar to those used by the engineers. And yet, instead of offering rides to others who have not received compensation and depend on public transport to go to the city of Cajamarca, they charged for rides. They only recognise money.

hunger, her voracity. Mamacocha is a mother of the communities; however, the water that is born from her nourishes the people following certain protocols: guiding the water through channels on the hillsides and plantations to feed the potatoes. Agriculture mediates the power of its waters and it is this that we can associate with the humanising process. Without mediation, the encounter can be catastrophic, because it makes the subject her captive. Now we move on to another Conga lagoon, El Perol.

2.1.2. El Perol: the misunderstanding and the dangerous pact

Regarding the El Perol lagoon, Dona Vila, a resident of El Tambo, shared a story in 2014 on the same day that we were going to the lagoons for a vigil. I lost contact with her later because the people of El Tambo suspected that she had secretly colluded with the Yanacocha mine, given that her relatives owned land in the Conga region. However, when we had just met and knew that I was going to Conga with a delegation of peasants, Vila did not want me to go without eating first. While she was enjoying her potatoes, she told me that when she was little, she lived near one of the lakes in the Conga region and that on occasions the lake "pulled" people into it. Moreover, according to Vila's testimony, the lagoon could also "be confused" by who it was eating or even "tempt" those who were approaching. Below, in her own words:

> I'll tell you about the employees of the boss in Cajamarca. My grandmother told me that he employed peasants, as there weren't many people around before, he raised many animals. Next to the El Perol lagoon, there was only one house. There they lived and the workers went to take the potatoes and the yoke of bulls to Cajamarca. When passing by the lagoon, the mist covered them, and then it opened up and they were looking at an apple tree. They looked at the apple [tree] and one started to pick them, the others gathered them. The apple disappeared, as did the man who was picking them. The apple was golden. They brought him back with four horses. The boss brought three healers from Huancabamba to pull the man out because he would come out from time to time with [the help of] ropes. The boss said that the water of the lagoon was in a golden pot. Inside, it's a village. It's very beautiful. In the lagoon, there is a hill, on Tuesdays and Fridays it opens its doors, the giant stones are moved and, inside, everything is gold. It's not for just anyone. It's for those who have a gift or something. Before, nobody went near the lagoon because we didn't go out [anymore], the cows would go to drink water and disappear. […] If you're lucky, the mountain gives it to you. One day I was with my father. He told me that I shouldn't look at the lagoons, otherwise they might make me stay. A cloud opened and a hen with chicks appeared. I warned my dad but he told me not to talk. And the chicken disappeared. You have to wait for it to pass, and that it was for us, but he had to give it sugar (Dona Vila, El Tambo, January 2014).

She also recounted that there are other lakes with similar characteristics in the region, like Cortada Chica, that ate a lot of people. Around fifty missing people are mentioned, and nobody talks about it.

There are several aspects of the story that should be highlighted. The lagoon provokes, puts tempting things within the reach of the person who is to be captured. In another narrative compiled in Mires Ortiz (2008b), gold is described as the very entity that "eats" and that is why when people take gold objects home, they wither, that is, they become thin and anemic, they turn yellow like gold. This is not unlike one of Nash's (1993) classic works. The author reports the experience of workers in tin mines in Oruro, Bolivia. In it she analyses how miners felt their eyes and lungs were being consumed by the mine as they extracted the mineral from underground, in exchange for a steady wage.

In the account on El Perol lagoon, Vila explains that there was only one house. Therefore, the lagoon was not used to human presence, and thus the attribute "wild" applies to the Conga region.

Another important element appears in this narrative: mist. According to the study by De la Torre (1986), mist is full of dangers because it can make someone dizzy and make them more vulnerable to the call of entities from the underworld. The mist also diverts the victim from the right path, something always disclosed in the stories, and the person is distracted because something catches their attention, that is, they respond to the call. In texts by Mires Ortiz (2001, 2008a, 2008b), mist is described as something that wanders through ravines and rivers, as if it were a flock of sheep that is advancing through the mountains.

Then, what seduces the workers is a fruit that does not grow in Cajamarca; it is apples grown on the coast of Peru. The story shows that the apples were golden and that gold can swallow. The victim leaves from time to time, tied up by entities that inhabit this lagoon, a fact similar to the previous story, and this implies the dangerous bond between the lagoon and the victim in the narrative. Vila further explains that gold, which can take the form of apples, as it does here, drags people away, captures them, seizes them, but this capturing can also be understood as the person's deviation from society, since they have become gluttonous, avid, immoral, with a burning desire to possess things.

Dona Vila clarified a little more based on her account. She said that her father, who was a healer, could mediate the desires of every entity in the cosmos. Viveiros de Castro (2002) had already defined Amazonian shamanism as the ability of certain people to intentionally cross bodily barriers and adopt the perspective of specific subjectivities, in order to manage the relationships between them and humans. While explaining to me about her father's abilities, Dona Vila said that she knows how to "decipher" pacts, what had to be given in exchange, how to reject them so as not to be seduced, and how to know if some things are really right for a certain person, for example, a gift, without having to give anything in return other than sugar. As a healer, her father knows how to manipulate this situation politically with the lagoon. Vila explained that her father knows that things that appear along the path are not placed there to be collected "without permission",

since this usually involves some form of exchange. That is why her father always left "sweets" (or white sugar) in response to the lagoon's enticements, while simultaneously making it clear that he himself was not the offering that would be given in exchange, rather he offered sweets in exchange for his gift.

Like the previous account, we see here that someone responds to the lagoon's enticements, is grabbed and held by ropes so they remain in captivity. The healer appears as a mediator in Dona Vila's story, and it is he who manages to break this vicious bond.

3. Final considerations

Based on analyses of the stories concerning the Mamacocha and El Perol lagoons, the relationships presented indicate the possibility of an "upside down world", where the power of the past is updated to provide coherence when facing the situation at hand: the voracity of open pit mining.

The accounts discussed in the text warn of possible consequences when the rules of reciprocity are not honoured. Here, we have a strong version in the case of Mamacocha: the parents hold on to their daughter of marriageable age and, while walking in wild territory, she was subject to having her body kidnapped by the inhabitants of the lagoon. In this new relationship, one of the signs of transformation is that the victim gains new eating habits from her captor. For the parents, the daughter dies, for the lagoon and the entity that appears with her, it concerns the transformation of an other into Mamacocha's daughter.

In the case of the El Perol story, people disappear, because when they accept what is "apparently" available, it opens a way for the production of a new relationship where whoever responds to the invitation becomes the captive of another world.

However, the case of mining is much more dangerous because it is not about the loss of a beloved daughter or a worker, but about interrupting the social ties of entire communities whose dynamism constitutes the collective. Mining makes the situation more serious because it seems to rely on powerful mediators in order to accumulate the tons of gold that they propose to extract from the bowels of the earth. This mediation, which involves a pact that Taussig (2010) and Nash (1993) describe as diabolical, is hidden precisely from local people, such that, in the end they become the objects of exchange in this negotiation. In other words, with modern mining the pact is more costly, and the result of betrayal is even greater aggressive destruction.

What this research demonstrates is that the premises of the world explored in the stories of Mamacocha and El Perol are evoked in the experience of fear and the possibility of losing autonomy in "mediations" with the lagoons, which, despite their fierce power, provide vitality to the body of the indigenous Andeans: water from the lagoons in the Conga region. As I mentioned in the Introduction, these stories are reminiscent of the Cajamarca world order in the face of this threat and it is no wonder that people, like Dona Vila, have shared these stories at such

a critical moment. The stories are evidence that the possibility of an upside-down world is closer than ever if the mining proposals are accepted.

The seduction that the sweets provoke affects not only the peasants, but also Humala, the aforementioned former president, and other Peruvian presidents who, in responding to the mining companies' enticements, in addition to retainers, become traitors. In his election campaign, Humala professed "*agua en vez de oro*" [water rather than gold]; once the president began saying that he wanted both water and gold, for the peasants this was impossible. The hunger is unbridled: it does not matter how many people the mining project will consume. Consuming here refers to the meaning given by Taussig and Nash, as mining consumes people's bodies and turns them into transformed bodies: they drink water from an unknown source, do not care about social ties, do not recognise their neighbours and rupture the rules of reciprocity. Likewise, the president can no longer distinguish who really supported him in his presidential candidacy. Thus, it seemed it was too late to humanise or tame him. He had become as gluttonous as Pizarro and Yanacocha.

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